THE

RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. IV. June 17, 1938 Sivan 18, 5698 No. 9

Editorials

EMIR ABDULLAH'S PLAN

RABBI GOLDENSON'S CRITIQUE OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONGRESS AND OURS

MAKE THE RADIO AN INSTRUMENT OF DEMOCRACY

Moses Hess, The Dreamer of Realism

By SAMUEL BLUMENFIELD

In Reply to "Rabbi 1938"

By EUGENE KOHN

Two Recent Biblical Studies

By H. L. GINSBERG

To Jerusalem the Holy – translated from the Hebrew of Yehudah Halevi

By ABRAHAM M. KLEIN

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200

EDITORIALS

Emir Abdullah's Plan

THE new commission despatched by the British government to Palestine is now busily engaged in "investigating." To our mind, they will not find anything which the first Royal Commission did not previously uncover. Officially, they are charged with the task of exploring at close range the realistic possibilities of enforcing the partition scheme. In the meantime, the Emir Abdullah, ruler of Transjordania, has announced a plan for a united state, including the present Palestine and Transjordania. As reported in the *New York Times,* the Emir's scheme reveals moderate temper, a reasonable degree of sincerity, and, significantly enough, an avowed desire to come to terms with the Jews and the British.

This demonstration of willingness to reopen the entire question is indeed significant, for the Royal Commission went to great pains to convince the world that the claims of the Jews and those of the Arabs were absolutely irreconciliable. Now, for the first time, a responsible Arab leader has given the lie to the fatalistic conclusions of the Commission. Those of us who have been following the Zionist project with some consistency have always maintained that the Jews and Arabs could conceivably be reconciled to one another. The Emir's plan, whether it be feasible or not, does constitute the basis for further discussion and proves beyond doubt that, if the moderate opinion in the Arab world were given an opportunity to be heard, some *modus vivendi* could be worked out.

What does this signify regarding the position taken by the British? We feel that it reveals what even the most naive have always suspected: that the British have made the wish father to the thought. The British have not hesitated to take full advantage of the desperate and tragic condition of the Jewish people to further their own political ambitions. They have not been deterred from issuing an ostensibly well-considered statement regarding the intransigeance of two peoples which reflects shame upon both. If what the British have said about the Jews and Arabs were true, without reservations, the world would justifiably have little sympathy for either.

From the Emir's published statements it becomes apparent that, if Britain means to act with its so-called traditional sense of fair play, the next move is up to the new commission. It should give a reasoned hearing to Emir Abdullah's plan—and not try to hide behind the obvious ruse that this plan "does not fall within the terms of reference." The first Royal Commission certainly did not find it difficult to go outside its assigned terms of reference when it submitted the partition plan. It had been sent to learn the cause of the troubles and to suggest remedies; no

indication had been given to it that it was authorized to question the mandate.

If the British government refuses to consider the Emir's suggestions at all, the world will know beyond question that the conflict and bloodshed in Palestine continue, and the problem of peace remains unsolved, not because the Arabs and the Jews have "irreconcilable" aims, but because the British do not want to reconcile these aims.

Rabbi Goldenson's Critique of The American Jewish Congress and Ours

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST has been very critical of the American Jewish Congress. It is of the opinion that the American Jewish Congress is not proceeding in a manner that will insure that responsible democratic representation of the common interests of American Jewry which it professes to desire. But if we cannot see eye to eye with the Congress, we are even more out of sympathy with much of the criticism that has been leveled against the Congress and, particularly, with that offered by Rabbi Goldenson of Temple Emanuel and given wide publicity through the space allotted to it in the *New York Times*. For we would vote 'yes' to the question submitted in the referendum of the Congress, if it were not that we deem it a farce to vote on the referendum altogether unless it is detached from the election. But Rabbi Goldenson and others who follow the lead of the American Jewish Committee, would vote 'no' on that question, if they voted at all. The reasons that Rabbi Goldenson gives for opposing an all-inclusive, democratically elected agency to represent American Jewry are three:

In the first place, he maintains that such an agency "cannot but give support to the charge that we Jews are at bottom racially and radically different from the rest of the citizens of the country. In effect," he goes on to say, "such an organization is an indirect acceptance of the racial philosophy of the Hitler regime."

The second objection of Rabbi Goldenson to an all-inclusive organization of American Jewry is "that such an all inclusive organization must become political in character. . . . The evils that may arise from turning the Jewish people of this country from individual citizens into a solidified group or one so regarded by our neighbors are terrifying to contemplate."

Finally, Rabbi Goldenson opposes the proposed agency because he sees in it "yet another danger . . . a change of emphasis from the Jew with a spirtual history and destiny to the Jew who is merely a Jew, from the Jew as a member of a religious community into a Jew as a unit of a separate ethnic group."

Let us inquire into the logic and validity of these objections seriatim. How does it follow that, because Jews unite in defense against the efforts of powerful interests to deprive them of their rights, liberties and livelihood, they show themselves to be radically different from the rest of the citizens of the country? Is there any other group that is attacked by the same enemies as the Jews, on the same grounds, and with the same weapons? If not, wherein is the reaction of Jews in seeking a unified and effective defense against unwarranted attack different from the reaction of any American group that finds its vital interests threatened? What has the calling into being of an all-inclusive agency of Jews to withstand anti-Semitic attacks and to further other interests that Jews may have in common to do with any racial theory whatsoever? Does the need of defense against Nazism arise from what Jews may or may not believe about their own racial origin and character, or from what Nazis have already proclaimed as their belief with regard to the *Schweinerei* of the alleged Jewish race? If Rabbi Goldenson likes to think that he is not a Jew by race and that he may even have Aryan blood in his veins, that is his privilege; it would

not in the least affect his status or his right to participate in the all-inclusive Jewish agency.

With every desire to treat Rabbi Goldenson with respect, THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST cannot help resenting the implication that the good and loyal Jews who are behind the Congress movement, even though we disapprove of their methods, are disciples of Hitler. We cannot believe that Rabbi Goldenson meant to imply that Dr. Stephen Wise and other Congress leaders believe that it is the right of the Jewish race to assert its superiority over other races by dominating and oppressing them. Yet this is what the Hitler race theory has come to mean in the light of the commentary supplied by the deeds of the Hitler regime. And if this is not what Rabbi Goldenson means, he owes it to the Congress leaders, to himself and to the American public, Jewish and Gentile, to erase the impression, if it is eradicable, of the innuendo implied in his statement. In all courtesy to Rabbi Goldenson we take this occasion to call his attention to the rabbinic injunction: *hahamim hizzaharu bedivrekhem.*

The second contention of Rabbi Goldenson that the existence of a unified Jewish representation to deal with the question of Jewish rights would invite an effort to exploit it for partisan political interests is more serious. But the mere existence of an identifiable Jewish group is sufficient temptation to such efforts whether it be represented in defense of its rights by one agency or by many. Jersey City Jewry has no all-inclusive Jewish representation but this does not prevent the Hague political machine from meddling with the policies of the Jewish Community Center and other local Jewish institutions. In a democratic organization in which every tendency in Jewish life is represented and in which there is no power of coercion but merely of organizing and implementing a common consent, there is less to fear than from the existing organizational anarchy which permits irresponsible groups and individuals to represent themselves as spokesmen of American Jewry.

But it is Rabbi Goldenson's last point that betrays the motivation of his opposition to the Congress and affords the clue to the illogical rationalizations of his other arguments. Rabbi Goldenson is afraid of Jewish nationalism. He is afraid to admit that Jews have other interests than religious ones. The whole world may attack us on other than religious grounds but we must not defend ourselves on other grounds. Indeed, Rabbi Goldenson's mind still operates with the outworn concept of religion held in the era of the Emancipation, the motion that a religion is a sort of society of metaphysicians of a particular school and not a function of a civilization, the system of values produced by a historic social entity and the institutions through which that system maintains itself. He does not see that there is no inconsistency between seeking openly and publicly the greatest measure of freedom and security for one's group and seeking to realize its highest and holiest ideals for itself and for the world. A community is not religious in proportion as it is impotent.

Reconstructionism is not afraid of Jewish nationalism and therefore considers the effective unification of American Jewry on a democratic basis as advocated by the American Jewish Congress an imperative necessity. It deplores all the more deeply the discrepancy between the Congress's professions and its methods. It wishes the Congress could appeal for democracy without suggesting the thought that behind its democratic gesture there is the determintaion to keep the Congress a mere sounding board for its present leadership and not a free forum for every tendency in Jewish life. We cannot accept the excuse that organizations not now affiliated with the Congress would not join no matter what election procedure were followed. The truth of such an assertion can only be determined by adopting the procedure we have recommended in our last issue. Again, therefore, we appeal to the Congress: Separate the refer-

endum from the election; if the referendum returns justify such action, invite all national Jewish organizations to a constituent assembly; let the constituent assembly determine the election procedure.

Make The Radio An Instrument For Democracy!

HOW to make democracy function effectively is the chief problem of all Americans who are seriously concerned with seeing to it that "government of the people, by the people, and for the people shall not perish from the earth." How can the instruments of political democracy be made to bring about a greater measure of economic democracy? This is the crucial question today. One suggestion for the improvement of our democracy, which we think ought to be implemented at the earliest opportunity, is to be found in the current issue of "The Social Frontier," a journal of educational criticism and reconstruction.

In a full-page announcement entitled "A Proposal for a Monthly Radio Referendum," it is proposed that a national committee be organized to attain the following objectives by Janaury 1, 1939:

(1) To persuade the national broadcasting networks to set aside one evening hour a week for the discussion of one important current social issue each month in the manner of *America's Town Meeting of the Air.*

(2) To secure funds and, if possible, the franking privilege to mail at least one million postcard ballots a month to a representative sampling of registered voters in all parts of the country to vote on the issue discussed that month.

(3) To secure funds, possibly a WPA grant, to establish a bureau in Washington to tabulate the results of each poll by States and for the nation, with a view to informing Congress of the will of the people on the issues discussed.

The announcement goes on to explain in detail the various aspects of this proposal, the object of which is to "transform America into a vast Town Meeting to discuss and act upon our most important national problems." Since free-speech, even for unpopular minority opinions, is of the very essence of democracy, we quite agree with the announcement when it claims that it regards this project as "the greatest contribution radio could make to the political education of the Amercan people, young and old, and to the preservation of democracy against the threatening inroads of fascism."

We too "know of no better investment for democracy," and we urge our readers who are interested in serving on a national committee to sponsor this project and to render advice and support (no funds will be solicited), to write immediately to Paul B. Diederich, Secretary, Bureau of Educational Reserach, Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio.

Moses Hess, The Dreamer of Realism*

By SAMUEL M. BLUMENFIELD **

ABOUT fifteen years ago when Ussishkin visited the cemetery in Koeln where Moses Hess is buried, he was shocked and grieved to find on Hess's tombstone a detailed description of him as one of the founders of the Social Democratic party but no reference to him as the author of "Rome and Jerusalem" and the forerunner of modern Zionism. This little incident bears significant testimony to the fate of the genius whose views and ideals do not find the fertile social soil where they can blossom and bear fruit.

Moses Hess committed the grave error of writing his "Rome and Jerusalem" about a quarter of a century before the rise of a generation that was ready for it. As a result, his contemporaries, even as his tombstone, remained silent and indifferent to the Zionist dreams and visions of the great seer, whose works and personality are becoming more challenging and of more compelling interest as time goes on.

I

Better to understand the views and dreams of Moses Hess, the thinker and idealist, one must refer briefly to his home background and some incidents in his life which helped shape the personality of Hess, the man.

Unlike many of the Zionist thinkers and spokesmen who followed him, Moses Hess was fortunate in having experienced in his life both the attachments and warmth of a wholesome traditional Jewish childhood, and the invigorating and challenging atmosphere of post-Napoleonic European society, in which he spent his youth and maturer days. In this regard he had an advantage over Herzl who felt the shocks of the modern world without the compensations of a Jewish cultural background, and over Ahad Ha-Am who looked even at the outside world through the prism of his Jewish heritage.

Born in 1812 in Bonn, Germany, Moses Hess fell heir to a rich Jewish life impressed upon him by a pious grandfather, who was still capable of shedding hot tears over the destruction of the Temple, and a mother who would lull little Moses to sleep with enchanting recitals of the glory of the Torah and of those who follow in her footsteps. Indeed, his "Rome and Jerusalem" is no less remarkable as a record of the power of emotional intangibles to fashion the dreams and visions of Hess, the Zionist, than it is penetrating as an analysis of the position of the Jew in the world of Hess, the modern Jewish thinker.

At the age of fourteen, Moses Hess lost his mother, of whom he preserved reverent and loving memories to the end of his days. One can indeed easily trace signs of a "mother fixation" in Hess's evaluation of the Jewish group as primarily that of a national family with the mother in its center. That mother worship becomes even more apparent when he says, "Each time I am faced with a new decision, there appears a suffering woman who gives me courage and strength to go on the untrodden path. How false is the notion that women have little influence upon the development of Judaism and Jewry. The reverse is true, for it is said, 'Because of the purity of womankind Israel was redeemed and shall yet be redeemed.'" It is this "idealized conception of woman that must have guided Hess in later life in his decision to marry a prostitute, "in order to atone for the evil society had done" to womankind which Hess always symbolized as "mater colorosa."

The bourgeois outlook of his father, the merchant, was bound to clash with the idealistic aspirations of his imaginative son. The death of Hess's mother and, later, his marriage out of the fold only intensified the chasm that existed between

*Written on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of his birth.

**Rabbi, Chicago, Ill.

father and son. Hess, therefore, at a very young age, began his wanderings away from home to England, France, back to his father in Koeln, attempting to adjust himself to a business career and again away from Jewry into a world which evoked in him "the greater pain of the suffering of the European proletariat." It is this world which over-shadowed his early Jewish training and became the dominating force for the major part of his life.

During these years, he experienced all the fortunes and misfortunes of the radical thinkers and philosophers of Germany of the thirties and the forties. He published his "Sacred History of Mankind," which was followed by his "The Triarchy of Europe"; at all times he was prolific in his contributions to socialist publications. In his revolutionary writings and activities, he was intimately associated with Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels and all the major radical thinkers and propagandists of his day. He participated in the revolution of 1848 and when reaction won out he was sentenced to death. Hess, however, managed in due time to escape to Switzerland where, for a while, he continued his revolutionary writings. In the fifties, Hess was again in Paris but this time devoted his energies to the study of the sciences, particularly anthropology. It was not until 1862, after about twenty years of separation from his people, that Hess returned as the author of "Rome and Jerusalem."

II

Dr. Zlocisti, the biographer of Moses Hess, likens Jewish life in Germany of that time to a stagnant pond and the appearance of "Rome and Jerusalem" to a stone thrown into a dead pool which produces a few bubbles and soon sinks to the bottom. And yet, it is the dull echo of the stone thrown by Moses Hess that still resounds mightily today wherever creative Jewish life goes on, whereas his life-long thunderings on socialism have hardly roused a murmur even among the very circles in whose behalf he dedicated the major part of his life's work. The funeral eulogies delivered in 1875 by his friends were buried with the remains of Moses Hess, and only on rare occasions, on the by-ways of socialist writing, does one come across mild references to the co-worker and comrade-in-arms of Marx and Engels, the pillars of socialism.

This verdict of history on Moses Hess, although somewhat cruel when viewed from the personal and human angle, appears justified upon careful consideration and evaluation of the nature of the respective contributions of Moses Hess to socialism and to Zionism.

In the course of heated debates and discussions that took place within radical circles in the Germany of his day, Moses Hess was nicknamed "The Communistic Rabbi." This appellation characterizes more than any other description the socialism of Moses Hess. For throughout his socialist career, even when he was engaged in revolutionary activities, he remained the same gentle, idealistic and almost saintly personality that he was when first he became attracted by the ethical teachings of "true socialism," the dominant radical school of thought before the appearance of Marx's Communist Manifesto.

"True socialism" was not strictly a school of thought with definite views or objectives. It was more in the nature of a movement or a vogue among certain literary circles particularly among philosophers and publicists who found in "true socialism" an expression for their dreams of a better and happier social order. These idealists were far removed from the iron rules of Marxist dialectics and the theories of class struggle. As one of them put it, *"Das proletariat ist die Menscheit"* and their major concern was the *"Menchheit"* rather than the *"Proletariat."* The laboring man was merely the symbol of the underdog but not the "be all and the end all" of their thinking. Theirs was fundamentally a system of a classless ethics that sprang from an abiding faith in the "true nature" of man as being good

and beautiful. Hess believed that once "nature" is purged of its dross, "egotism," it is bound to find its "natural inclination toward love." It was the contention of the "true socialists" that human beings harbor within themselves the germs of humanity. Their objective, therefore, was not only the amelioration of the position of the proletarian but also that of the capitalist his misguided oppressor. Socialism, to Hess and his fellow "true socialists," was not so much a question of "bread" or, as some of them referred to it contemtpuously, "the stomach," but of ideals, values and human dignity. Small wonder that Karl Marx looked upon Hess and his associates as misguided servants of reaction and capitalism and, in the Communist Manifesto and other writings, poured his invectives on the poor head of "Rabbi Moses."

Adherence to the basically humanitarian views of "true socialism" did not prevent Moses Hess from expounding, in his later writings, views and doctrines very much akin to those of "economic materialism"; such as the theory of concentration of capital and its inevitable collapse, the ultimate economic revolution to be brought about by the laboring class, and other views and opinions which were later formulated with greater clarity and more conviction by Karl Marx. In his still later writings, however, Hess went back again to his original Spinozistic ideals of the "unity of Mankind" and the advent of the "Social Sabbath" for humanity. One seeks in vain for a clear-cut and well defined philosophy in Hess's writings, for, as Sidney Hook well puts it, it is futile to expect system or consistency from one whose first interest was not in "social analysis" but, like the old Hebrew prophets, in "social justice."

For his arduous and devoted labors in the cause of early socialism, Hess was crowned with the title of "The Father of German Communism." When one considers how little reverence the Marxian school has shown for ancestral teachings and ancestry one can well understand why socialists have shown so little attention to the idealistic and utopian dreams of "father" Hess.

III

An altogether different fate awaited Hess's contribution to Jewish national thought. Although at the beginning, he hardly received any notice, and that primarily in the nature of ridicule and abuse'* the study of Moses Hess has grown in depth and enthusiasm as Zionism has grown and developed. Today, Hess enjoys the full attention and admiration of every student of Jewish Nationalism. This interest is quite natural when one considers that, whereas to Socialists Hess is only one of the *last* of the school of Utopians, to Zionists he is a pathfinder and pioneer, the *first* to proclaim the basic principles of modern Jewish nationalism and socialism.

If Karl Marx over-shadows Hess in socialism because of his "Communist Manifesto," Hess has assured for himself immortality in Jewry because of his Zionist Manifesto as it found expression in his "Rome and Jerusalem." Above all, while in his socialist writings Hess is the dreamer, vague, immature, and inconsistent, he is in his Jewish writings the clear, precise and forceful realist. In his "Rome and Jerusalem," Hess deals with the problem of Judaism and Jewry. In his attempt to define and evaluate Judaism, his rich Jewish background of childhood days stood him in good stead, for very frequently he grasped intuitively some of the fundamental teachings of Judaism which to an outsider would have been inaccessible without arduous labor and painful effort. He had, for instance, an entirely modern conception of the nature of Judaism when he said, "It is not doctrine that made the Biblical-patriarchal life, which is the

*The Russian Jewish Weekly, the "Voschad," called him a "charlatan" and Abraham Geiger called him "one who is almost an apostate and who, after having proven his bankruptcy in his socialist and other fake teachings, is trying to reawaken Jewish nationalism alongside with such nationalism as that of Czechs, Montenegrins, etc."

source of the Jewish cult, but it is the patriarchal life of the Jewish ancestors that is the creative basis of the religion of the Bible, which is nothing else but a national historical cult developed out of family traditions."

The same fine creative intuition which made him echo the views of Jehudah Halevi helped him also anticipate some of the learned and lucid interpretations of Jewish religion by Ahad Ha'Am. Like Ahad Ha'Am, Hess stressed the view that Judaism is not so much the salvation of the individual in the other world as the perfection of social life in this world. "Judaism is rooted in the love of the family; patriotism and nationalism are the flowers of its spirit, and the coming regenerated state of human society will be its ripe fruit." He also emphasized that Judaism, unlike Paganism and medieval Christianity, is neither "materialistic" nor "spiritualistic," but, "like love," merges the body with the spirit.

To be sure Moses Hess could not escape the influence of the "pan-movements" of his days which sought special missions for peoples and races. Even the Jewish Reformers, who in their early days were eager to reduce and delimit the functions of Judaism, were imbued with the ideal of the "mission" of Israel. However, even in the "missionary" ideals of Hess, one detects a broad sociological conception of peoples, for he views the phenomenon of peoplehood as the product of natural and historic forces which help shape the particular characteristics or callings of differing human groups. He goes so far as to say that "the spiritual views of a man of whatever religion or race are the product of his particular environment." However, the roots of those conceptions he finds in nature itself. "Just as nature does not produce flowers and fruits of a general character, nor general plants and animals, but produces particular plant and animal types, so does the creative power in history produce only folk types." The limited knowledge of anthropology of his day led Hess to believe in the existence of a pure Jewish race; but these errors are more than balanced by his remarkable insight into the nature of religion in general and of Jewish religion in particular. Indeed he anticipated the findings of modern psychologists and Jewish scholars by many years when he declared that "either religion is identical with the national, social and moral life or it is mere hypocrisy," and when he stated that "the Jew was not commanded to believe but to study the knowledge of God," and that "when a man turns his back on tradition he really severs himself from Judaism itself and from its national essence."

IV

If, in his appreciation of Judaism, Moses Hess still shows traces of the sentimentalism of his traditional background, he is, in his evaluation of the position of the Jew in the modern world, the keen observer and the seasoned modern thinker. Moses Hess was the first of his generation to declare that Jewish disabilities are not due only to religion. The memories of the Damascus Affair were always vivid with him. Neither could he forget the sting of the personal insult administered to him when he submitted his contribution to a contest in patriotic songs and was rejected with the statement, "You are a Jew." But, unlike his contemporaries, the Jewish Reformists and the converted Heines and Boernes, he was convinced that all attempts at imitation and compromises to please the outside world, even baptism itself, were "false passports" to Europe. "Mask yourself," he says, "a thousand times over. Change your name, religion and character; travel throughout the world incognito, so that people may not recognize the Jew in you; yet every insult to the Jewish name will strike you, even more than the pious man who is permeated with the spirit of Jewish solidarity and who fights for the honor of the Jewish name." Rather than cringe and hide his identity, he declares provocatively, "I regret exceedingly that my name is not Itzik."

As Hess analyzed the anomolous position of the Jew as a "stranger" among other nations and the deep-rooted longing of the Jews for Zion, he came to the inevitable conclusion that "in the exile, the Jewish people cannot be regenerated" and that only the major operation of a reconstructed Jewish life in its own homeland, with its own culture and pattern of living will solve the problem of the Jew and Judaism. His, however, is not merely a Messianic dream about "the end of days," but a realistic appraisal of the economic and political forces that operate in modern society. He turns his attention as much to the building of the Suez Canal as to his Bible; he takes note of the alliances and misalliances of European powers, while he reiterates the pious utterances of a Kalischer. Indeed, Hess's Zionism combines the deep-rooted longings and dreams of the lovers of Zion who preceded him, and the breadth of vision of the political Zionists who followed him. In a sense Hess in his day, achieved a synthesis of the salient features of the spiritual and cultural Zionism of Ahad Ha'Am and the political Zionism of Herzl, a synthesis which was not achieved by our generation until the issuance of the Balfour Declaration.

In the light of events of the last half century, Hess's political observations have gained in prophetic quality. In his writings, Hess foreshadows the World War and the desperate struggle between France and Germany, the need for a United States of Europe, and above all, the significant role Palestine is destined to play again in the world's political arena as the bridge between European civilization and Oriental culture. Only a dreamer of realism could have uttered lines like these, which have the familiar ring of A. D. Gordon and Chaim Weitzman: "A great calling is reserved for you: to be a living channel of communication between three continents. You should be bearers of civilization to the primitive peole of Asia, and the teachers of the European sciences to which your race has contributed so much. . . . You will come to the land of your fathers crowned with the crown of age-long martyrdom, and there, finally, you will be healed from all your ills! Your capital will again bring the wide stretches of barren land under cultivation; your labor and industry will once more turn the ancient soil into fruitful valleys, reclaim the flat lands from the encroaching sands of the desert. . . . I know of the great efforts which are being exerted on the part of the Jews to train our younger generation as useful laborers. But I know also that the Jews in exile, at least the majority of them, cannot devote themselves successfully to productive labor, in the first place, because they lack the most necessary condition—an ancestral soil, and secondly, because they cannot assimilate with the peoples among whom they live without at the same time denying their national religion and tradition."

The story of Moses Hess would not be complete in our day without some reference to the very title of his *magnum opus*, "Rome and Jerusalem." Jewish history and legend from days immemorial have linked events in Rome with the destinies of Jerusalem. Both the destruction of the Temple and the coming of the redeemer are tied up with the fortunes of Rome. Moses Hess, having lived in the springtime of European liberalism, believed that "the deliverance of the Eternal City on the Tiber" was the harbinger of the "redemption of the Eternal City on Mount Moriah." Today again, in more than one way, Rome and Jerusalem are linked together. Little however, did Hess realize that the link would be one of opposition, that we would be compelled to see in Rome the source and symbol of fascism, the enemy of the Jew and the despoiler of Jerusalem. One can, indeed, say of Hess, in the words of the rabbis "He prophesied, but he knew not what he prophesied." Indeed, Rome and Jerusalem are again linked together. Alas, this time as in the days of the second Temple, it is not Rome *and* Jerusalem, but Rome *versus* Jerusalem.

In Reply to "Rabbi 1938"

By Eugene Kohn

I

In a recent issue of The Reconstructionist, there appears an article entitled "Rabbi 1938," in which the author, Jay I. Goldin, a rabbinical student, poses a number of questions that trouble the candidate for the rabbinate in our day, as he faces his new responsibilities on the threshold of his career. He very significantly addresses his questions to Reconstructionists. He does not expect an answer from an intransigent Orthodoxy that refuses to reckon with change, nor from a Reformism that reiterates the discredited shibboleths of the era of Emancipation. He does not turn to a Conservatism that seeks to obscure by makeshift compromises the clearcut issues between traditional and modern viewpoints and the glaring discrepancies between modern practice and traditional *halakhah*. His questions are, therefore, a tribute to Reconstructionism. But they are no less a challenge to it, for they imply that Reconstructionism has not yet provided an answer to them.

The questions raised by the article are three, which may be summarized as follows: (1) In view of the ignorance of Judaism prevalent among members of the younger generation, and their almost complete alienation from those activities and interests that constitute the very content of Jewish life, how can the rabbi appeal to them for the reconstruction of Jewish life?; they have nothing of that life left to reconstruct. (2) What authoritative statement is there on the subject of Jewish law and observance, to which the modern rabbi can point as indicating what may reasonably be expected of modern Jews by way of religious practice? (3) What do we know about the nature of God; if we lack such knowledge, how can we honestly preach about a God whose nature we do not know?

These are searching questions that cannot be answered off-hand in a magazine article, nor, for that matter, in a book or in a whole series of books, the literary output of any one individual. Only as Reconstructionist philosophy influences the thinking, feeling and living of Jews, and finds expression in the cultural and institutional life of the Jewish people, will answers to such questions emerge. In the present embryonic state of Reconstructionism, which is only in its fourth year, too much must not be expected of it.

Nevertheless such questions as Mr. Goldin raises, evidencing as they do a serious intellectual approach to Jewish problems, must not be ignored. Even if a final answer is not to be expected, a discussion of the problem is itself a contribution to such an answer. It is in this spirit that I am moved to reply to Mr. Goldin and to others who may share his perplexities. I believe, in general, that Mr. Goldin underestimates the contribution that Reconstructionism has made or is in process of making to the solution of the problems he poses.

II

The first question would indeed be unanswerable if the condition of alienation from every form of Jewish activity, from every Jewish culture trait, and from every traditional mode of Jewish behavior were universal. Then indeed there would be no Judaism to reconstruct and we should not even be discussing the problem, for there would be no problem. Death is a final, though not generally considered a satisfactory, solution of all problems. Happily this is not quite the case, not even with the younger generation. True, that "to reconstruct a tradition, one must first have that tradition." What is not true is that alienation from Jewish tradition is complete even among the most ignorant of Jews. Most Jews

still cling to some Jewish behavior patterns, to some vestiges of what was once a flourishing Jewish civilization, to some faint memories of a historic past and some vague consciousness of a common Jewish destiny. They cling to these few scraps of Judaism that are left to them, but they cling to them feebly because they do not experience, in thus clinging to them, the joy that accompanies all healthy, vital functioning. Their Judaism is not dead, but neither is it alive: it is dying rather than living.

But where there is life there is hope. The feeble hold of most Jews on Jewish tradition is mainly based on the fact that even as much of it as they do retain is *without meaning* for them. This suggests a method for remedying the situation. The Reconstructionist program affords the missing clue to the meaning of whatever fragment of the Jewish tradition still affects the behavior of Jews. That fragment is like a single piece from a jig-saw puzzle; but the rabbi whose Jewish point of view is in line with the Reconstructionist philosophy will be able to point out how the picture must be completed if that fragment is to have meaning as part of a design of modern Jewish living. Jewish life can be revived by injecting new meaning relevant to the present interests of Jewish men and women into whatever Jewish behavior patterns still prevail. This will give a new zest to Jewish activity and thus make for the extension of the area of Jewish interests. Such a transfusion of new purpose into the bloodstream of Jewish life may well prove the decisive factor in enabling the Jewish organism to recover from the present crisis in the malady that threatens its life.

III

This answer to the first question of Mr. Goldin also goes a great way towards answering his second question. Certainly, before we can expect Jews to conform to definite standards of Jewish behavior and before we can formulate such standards into a code, we must enable them to see some sense to the behavior that we ask of them. But it seems to me that Mr. Goldin's demand for an authoritative statement on Jewish law, one that may serve as a comprehensive practical guide for the behavior of Jews who wish to be loyal to Judaism, is somewhat premature.

Before we can solve the problem of that anarchy in Jewish practice which results from the general disintegration of Jewry that has been going on since the Emancipation, we must create the preliminary conditions for the restoration of authority in Jewish life. This demands a recognition of the fact that the sanction for such authority can no longer rest on the theory of the supernatural revelation of a law which is final and perfect, but on recognition of law as a democratic instrument of social collaboration in the pursuit of common aims. This must apply to "religious" as well as secular law. Its religious character derives from the fact that the purpose of the law is conceived as the bringing of human life into harmony with the divine spirit that confers value on life, that its aim is individual and social salvation in terms of personal fulfillment and human brotherhood. Such a law cannot accept the authority of any verbal text as superior to ethical, rational and aesthetic criteria.

In a word the source of authority in Jewish law must be the Jewish community itself and its needs, using the term community not in a local sense, but to include *k'lal yisrael.* The authority of Jewish law must be based on its contribution to human welfare in this world and not on the hope of individual reward or fear of individual punishment in any imagined posthumous existence. This means that a process of evaluating the specific content of the Jewish legal tradition must precede the codification of Jewish standards of conduct.

Moreover, if the development of Jewish law is to proceed democratically as a function of the social life of the Jewish national community, its enforcement must depend on the organized consensus of Jews. But this cannot be effected un-

til an integrated Jewish communal life has been achieved.

The mere statement of these indispensable preliminaries to the establishment of the authority necessary for a vigorously functioning Jewish law shows us how far we are at present from having satisfied them. Nevertheless, it cannot be gainsaid that Reconstructionism has made its own modest contribution toward achieving at least these preliminary objectives. In all its publications, it has stressed human welfare as the criterion of evaluation that must determine the dynamic process by which tradition must be continually recast, by which certain elements must be permitted to become obsolete while entirely new elements must be incorporated, to become the tradition of later generations. Reconstructionism has also, not without effect, stressed the need for community organization and a more integrated and organic Jewish life.

IV

Finally, in answer to Mr. Goldin's third question, it is necessary to affirm that it is possible to preach about God without knowing his nature. The assumption that a common metaphysic of God is necessary to a common faith in Him and loyalty to His service is a hang-over from mediaeval scholasticism. Men have always speculated about the nature of God and doubtless always will, and many of these speculations have been fruitful. It is not to minimize the value of metaphysical thought that we insist that a solution of the metaphysical problem of the universe is not indispensable to a solution of the religious problem of Judaism. Metaphysics may contribute to enlightening our conception of God, but our faith in Him does not depend on an incontrovertable metaphysics in order to function beneficently.

If we cannot preach the reality of God without understanding His nature, we cannot preach the reality of God, for no man has yet been able to penetrate to the essence of God's nature. The most that we can expect is that many shall know the *meaning of God,* shall know what they mean by "God" when they talk about Him. To the unphilosophical this may appear a distinction without a difference, but it is not. We speak about man, but who really knows the nature of man? of matter, but who knows what matter really is? of life and of death, but who has penetrated deeper into their essential nature than the crudest and most primitive savage? But we all commonly use the terms "man," "matter," "life" and "death" without ambiguity. Similarly it is possible to know what we mean by "God," without professing to know much about the nature of God.

Reconstructionism has defined the meaning of God in terms which make it possible to serve God. *"To believe in God is to reckon with life's creative forces as forming an organic unity, and as giving meaning to life by virtue of that unity.* Life has meaning for us when it elicits from us the best of which we are capable, and fortifies us against the worst that may befall us" (Kaplan, The Meaning of God in Jewish Religion, p. 26). Surely it should be possible for a rabbi to strengthen in his congregation the conviction that there is a Divine and invincible Power which is manifest in all that there is of beauty, truth and goodness in the world, and which is served by devotion to truth and love; to teach that human life derives whatever worth it has from this service. One does not have to be a metaphysician to worship God; a simple child can do so.

The talk of a Jewish conception of God is misleading in the extreme. Not only has the conception of God held by Judaism varied from age to age, but it has always varied from individual to individual. Maimonides' conception of God doubtless resembled that of the Mohammedan and Christian scholastics more than it did that of Rashi or the Kabbalists. Maimonides' metaphysics was derived from Aristotle more than from Moses and the Prophets, but his religion was Jewish, because he identified the

manifestation of God in human life with the same values and ideals as did the other spiritual leaders of Israel and associated them with the same concrete experiences and reactions. In modern times Jews will divide along metaphysical lines according to their predilection for particular schools of philosophy: idealistic, realistic, empirical, pragmatic, etc., that have no immediate relation to Jewish experience as such. But Jews can still religiously address God in the same terms and think of Him as the Source of Israel's Torah "who has sanctified us with His precepts." Let our rabbis, if they are so minded, engage in metaphysical speculation, but let them not despair if metaphysics baffles them. They have a sufficiently broad and important area for their religious activity in strengthening their congregation's faith that life has meaning and purpose and that our best moral insights are not vain illusions and escapes from reality but prophecies of what can and must be achieved, if life is to fulfill itself.

Two Recent Biblical Studies

by H. L. Ginsberg

Solomon Goldman, *The Golden Chain or Jewish Literature through the Ages in Five Volumes*: Volume I—Part 1, *Torah and Earlier Prophets,* Bloch Publishing Company, New York, 1937, pp. 219, b vo.

Joseph Reider, *The Holy Scriptures—Deuteronomy with Commentary,* The Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 5697-1937, pp. 355, 8 vo. 2 maps.

THOUGH diverging very widely in presentation and treatment, these two books may conveniently be reviewed together by reason not only of their kindred contents but also of their coincident critical positions. These are defined in the respective prefaces and, of course reflected throughout the respective works. To quote the more tranquil formulation of Reider, they uphold "in the main, though not in every detail, the traditional point of view concerning the origin and composition of the Pentateuch. While acknowledging some of the positive results of the modern historical-critical school, such as the elucidation of biblical history and literature through the contemporary history and literature of the Ancient Orient," they reject "the so-called higher criticism . . . especially the source theory or documentary hypothesis, according to which the Pentateuch is made up of various sources or documents of different age." Elsewhere Reider states and Goldman implies that their own criticism goes so far as to assume a certain amount of scribal corruption and editorial augmentation and manipulation of the Mosaic text. A generation ago, when the issue was still largely Science versus Religion rather than Criticism versus Tradition, the Hebrew writer David Frishman demanded with reference to contemporary efforts of conciliation: "For whom are they written, for my grandfather or for me? My grandfather will spurn any solution that uproots a jot or a tittle of tradition, and I will scorn any that leaves standing a jot or a tittle of which I disapprove." Of course the answer to Frishman's argument is that there was still a third category of readers who were grateful for serious studies of this sort, and so it is reasonable to ask whether the doctrine of our author on the origin of the Pentateuch is likely to bring comfort to any considerable body of earnest Jews of modern outlook. The reviewer doubts it, but cannot enter into the question here.

The idea of Rabbi Goldman's book is excellent. Each book of the Bible is "treated under several different headings.

First the contents are given, then follow the words, sentences, or passages most quotable and most likely to impress themselves on the mind of the reader, then the authorship style, philosophy and influence of each book are briefly considered. In some instances a special section is devoted to history, in which is presented a resume of the historical material contained in the book under discussion." It is profitable reading for the non-Hebraist, and enjoyable reading for anyone. The author has not Reider's mastery of the literature on the subject, and too often refutes the critics by calling them names (anti-Semites). Far too much reliance is placed on Yahuda.

Professor Reider's book, whose object is more scholarly than that of Rabbi Goldman, is a heavily documented work of exegesis and edification. The former is rarely original but usually well informed and informative; to the latter which is mainly derived from the Midrash and the Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages, there can be no objection in principle, and as a rule the author's choice is good. In explaining apparent internal contradictions or indications of a late date of composition, he follows in the footsteps of the late David Hoffmann. The translation of the Jewish Publication Society is employed in the text, other suggestions being added occasionally in the notes. An index facilitates the use of the commentary as a work of reference.

TO JERUSALEM THE HOLY*

OF YEHUDAH HALEVI

by ABRAHAM M. KLEIN

In sooth, what savoure hath now food for me
How can I hie me to the sote feste
The while that I in western londe be.
And my forweped herte is in the east?
In what wyse, eek, shall I my vow express,
Zion, mine oath to thee, how shall I show
Sith thou art bound in bond of heathenesse
And I in Maurish fetters am laid low?
—The splendour and richesse of alle Spain,
Y-wis it is a smal thing in mine eyn
Whan that I long for to behold agayn
Even the pore duste of thy shende shrine!

*Done in Chaucerian English to preserve the archaic flavor of the Hebrew.